

First records of Dimorphic Egrets *Egretta dimorpha* for Uganda and Rwanda

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Premières mentions de l'Aigrette dimorphe *Egretta dimorpha* pour l'Ouganda et le Rwanda. Une Aigrette dimorphe *Egretta dimorpha* a été photographiée sur l'île Samuka, Lac Victoria, Ouganda (00°24'N 33°16'E), le 17 avril 2005. Sur le même site, 50 nids de l'espèce ont été trouvés dans une colonie d'Aigrettes garzettes *E. garzetta* le 23 avril. Il s'agit des premières mentions pour l'Ouganda. Par après, l'espèce a été observée à plusieurs reprises en d'autres endroits du lac Victoria. Le 6 novembre 2006, une aigrette, photographiée au Lac Hago, au Parc National de l'Akagera, Rwanda, a été identifiée comme la première Aigrette dimorphe pour le Rwanda.

On 17 April 2005, KO photographed an unfamiliar egret with reddish/pinkish feet and lores, on Samuka Island, Lake Victoria, Uganda (00°24'N 33°16'E). This small island of 5 ha is covered by grass and shrubs, and has a rocky shoreline and 5–10 m-tall trees. It is a tourist site with a guesthouse and a campsite, c.1 hour from Jinja by boat. On 23 April, we organised a second visit and identified over 100 white-morph Dimorphic Egrets *Egretta dimorpha* (Fig. 1), of which we also found 50 nests. The latter might represent an underestimate as the birds were nesting in the same trees as Little Egrets, and only nests on which Dimorphic Egrets were observed were attributed to this species. Moreover, the count was made at 13.30 hrs, when most birds were foraging away from the area. The attendant of the guesthouse reported that many more birds arrive in the evening. This is the first record of Dimorphic Egret for Uganda—the species is not mentioned in Carswell *et al.* (2005) and it is considered a marine bird in East Africa (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996). Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) map only one inland record, in Kenya.

Other species nesting on the island included Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (650 nests; the second breeding site known in Uganda after the Musambwa Islands), Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (100 nests; a new breeding site for the species) and Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* (200 nests; the second known breeding site in Uganda). We also counted 58 Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* and 15 Intermediate Egrets *E. intermedia* (both not breeding). The island represents a large mixed roost site for egrets and Long-tailed Cormorants.

Subsequent observations of Dimorphic Egrets, made during waterbird counts organised by NatureUganda, are as follows: five on the Mgamba Islands, near Entebbe, and four at Port Bell, near Kampala, both in the first week of May 2005; five on the Musambwa Islands, on the west side of Lake Victoria, on 13 June 2005, with one there on 31 January 2006; 18 on Samuka, on 8 February 2006; 60 on Kitobo Island, 15 on Nshere Island and 23 on Banda Island, all part of the Ssese Islands, on 12 February 2006; and 11 in Nakiwogo Bay, on Info Island near Entebbe International Airport, on 16 February 2006.

The Dimorphic Egrets appeared similar to Little Egrets but differed in breeding plumage by their reddish-pink lores and bright red feet (Zimmerman *et al.* 1996, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002). Some did not exhibit breeding condition, although they were carrying nesting material. Non-breeders were identified by the yellow feet colour extending up the black legs (the feet are more sharply defined in Little Egret: Zimmerman *et al.* 1996, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002).

These records indicate that Dimorphic Egret is now widespread on the shores of Lake Victoria and has probably been overlooked previously. They also reveal how much of the lake is unexplored ornithologically.

On 6 November 2006, Manfred Wichmann, who visited Samuka Island in April 2005 with AB & KO, photographed an *Egretta* sp. at Lake Hago, in Akagera National Park, Rwanda, which, based on the yellow-greyish colour of the feet extending up the black legs, he identified as a white-morph Dimorphic Egret in non-breeding plumage.



Figure 1. Dimorphic Egrets / Aigrettes dimorphes *Egretta dimorpha*, Samuka Island, Lake Victoria, Uganda, 23 April 2005 (Kaj Østergaard)

Figure 2. Dimorphic Egret / Aigrette dimorphe *Egretta dimorpha*, Lake Hago, Akagera National Park, Rwanda, 6 November 2006 (Manfred Wichmann)

(Fig. 2). This appears to be the first record for Rwanda (Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002).

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